

Abstracts

Horst Pöttker: Freedom of Communication in the Digital Age. Twelve Hypotheses

Digitalization has brought about a strong increase and proliferation of communication capabilities. Thereby, the previously media-technically established separation between mass communication (public) and individual communications (private sphere) have been successively suspended. Accordingly, it is possible that prevailing conventional, legal (Art. 5, Paragraph 2 GG) and professional ethics (press standards) barriers regarding freedom of the press have been circumvented in social media environments and have therefore become ineffective. In order to reassert the necessary barriers regarding freedom of communication, also in the digital domain (again), without obstructing the given opportunities towards the establishment of a public sphere, either journalistic professional ethics must become a part of general moral codes or else government regulation of journalistic media must be expanded to include network providers. The first path is a very long one and the second one is burdened with the risk of instrumentalization for the purpose of wielding power.

Peter G. Kirchschräger: Freedom of Opinion and Protection from Racism on the Internet. Socioethical Considerations Regarding Two Conflicting Human Rights

To the degree that racism or hate-speech increases on the internet and in social media, so does the demand to censure such content. At the same time, it remains necessary to protect the freedom of opinion and information. Therefore, the right to non-discrimination, which is also an inherent element of human rights, as well as the freedom of opinion and information must both be realized. For the resolution of this conflict of priorities, in this article human rights are interpreted within an indivisible social-ethical frame of reference. Accordingly, it is shown that racism on the World Wide Web can be curbed while preserving the freedom of opinion and information.

Hektor Haarkötter: No Issue?! Freedom of Information and News Coverage Negligence

Freedom of opinion and the press on the one hand and freedom of information on the other can sometimes lead to conflicts. The right to narrate journalistic stories or to simply not narrate them, stand opposite the right of citizens to obtain all socially relevant information. The reasons for the neglect of news coverage can be specified with the help of a subtractive news value theory. Moreover, agenda cutting, journalistic mainstreaming and the lack of diversity in media professions also require discussion. The media-ethical conflict of standards can be mitigated through news and media education, oriented towards classic models.

*Christian Mihr: Actively Demanded at Home and Defended World Wide:
An Overview of Freedom of the Press*

During the past ten years 787 journalists and media employees have been killed in the pursuance of their professions. Thereby, an increase of violence has been noted in recent years. However, not all threats towards freedom of the press are as easily objectified as the number of killed and imprisoned journalists. The article deals with the distinctly more complex contemporary threats towards freedom of the press and describes, from the perspective of the human rights organization “Reporters Without Borders”, how that organization responds to these problems in its practical work. Thereby, issues identified in longstanding democracies like Germany as well as problems found in dictatorships, authoritarian and deteriorating states are addressed: escalating mass surveillance, censorship, self-censorship, impunity for crimes against journalists, media concentration, new agents of violence and the responsibility of private platforms.

*Christoph Böttigheimer: “Freedom of Word”. God’s Word as an Answer
to Mankind and as a Reason for Human Freedom*

Human beings explain their world and their reality by using language. It is the capability of employing language that enables them to ask questions which go beyond the world. Man’s ability of self-transcendence, however, is limited. This is the reason why man is not capable of answering the question of his existence. The article discusses the question, in what way God’s word is able to provide answers to essential questions concerning man, and, how God’s word can explain human dignity, respectively the fundamental right of freedom of speech. Finally, the essay focuses on the question what the concept “freedom of word” implies in the context of church and religion.

*Hans Geybels: Spirituality of Christian-inspired communication.
A practical theological exploration*

This article is a contribution towards the spirituality of a Christian-inspired communication. Rather than making theoretical reflections, the spirit of Jesus’ communicative actions is analysed. The goal and techniques of his communication are inextricably connected, and all serve to proclaim the Kingdom of God. After investigating Jesus’ own way of communicating, consequences that entails for a Christian-inspired way of communicating today can be identified: for Christian-inspired communication to work, it must comply with several key criteria, such as openness, authenticity, positive action, respect, empowerment... Only communication driven by spirituality is able to re-enact the miracle of Pentecost. Authentic Christian communication testifies how the message of Christ lives within them, what it brings about in them, and how they testify about it in the world.